

**CITY OF ROCKVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

**July 15, 2004
MEETING NO. 08-04**

APPLICATION: HDC2004-00305

DATE FILED: June 28, 2004

APPLICANT: David P. Spillers
OWNER: 311 W. Montgomery Ave.
Rockville, MD 20850



Subject

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION:

The subject property is a single-family residence that faces south on West Montgomery Avenue and is a part of a row of late 19th century houses in the 300 block of the historic district.

PREVIOUS ACTIONS AT THIS ADDRESS:

HD-208-88	Request to remove dead and dying bushes, denied 10/18/88
CAV03-14812	Request for the demolition and removal of a shed and garage and replacement with grass, approved 6/18/91
HDC94-0053	installation of a lattice fence, approved 7/19/94

REQUEST: The Applicant requests a Certificate of Approval for the following actions:

1. Re-approve application HDC94-0053, the installation of a six-foot privacy fence on west and north property lines, with a change in lower lattice material.
2. Remove two damaged trees in the rear yard which include a Black Gum tree and a Maple tree.
3. Remove a Black Cherry tree in the side yard, which is causing damage to the foundation of the house.
4. Widen a rear dormer to width of the interior staircase, which is eight-feet wide, to reuse two existing windows in the dormer and add a new matching third custom-made window.



Aerial views of 311 W. Montgomery Ave.



1. *Historic, archeological, or architectural value and significance of the site or structure and its relationship to the historic, archeological, or architectural significance of the surrounding area.*

This contributing resource, a 1922, two and a half story, three bay by three bay frame Georgian Revival structure is a modern interpretation of American Georgian Colonial architecture and interest which was popularly revived with the Chicago Columbian Exposition in 1893.

The speculation in suburban real estate by prominent Washingtonians is evident in the construction of this house, built in 1922 for an heiress to the duPont family. It is an early and faithful copy of a style of colonial architecture which became known as "Williamsburg" and which remains in vogue.

2. *The relationship of the exterior architectural features of the structure to the remainder of the entire structure and to the surrounding area.*

The proposed lattice fence will stand along the western site boundary. The fence will be located exactly three feet from the western boundary. The fence will start at the western edge of the garage foundation and continue to the rear of the property, while encroaching five feet or less into the public alley at the rear of the property. The proposed lattice fence meets the existing chain link fence that begins at the site's eastern boundary and continues to the structure's east elevation.



Black Gum tree in rear yard.

The trees that are being proposed for removal are not part of a historic or planned landscape. The Black Cherry tree is likely a volunteer tree that has grown too close to the house and threatens the foundation of the house. Black gum was damaged by the fall of an adjacent tree in a storm and it presents a danger to neighboring structures. The Maple tree is another volunteer that grew beside the foundation of a razed garage. The tree has suffered from drought and appears to be ailing. **At the request of staff, the City Forester has examined the subject trees, approves removal for the following reasons:**

- ⌘ Black Gum in the rear yard is in poor condition and has structural issues
- ⌘ Maple in the rear yard by the driveway is declining/dying, likely girdling root and drought impacts
- ⌘ Black Cherry in the side yard is impacting the foundation of the house and is not of historical significance



Black Cherry tree in side yard

In addition the City Forester examined a Sugar Maple in the right rear yard. She states that the tree has a double leader with separating leads and presents an immediate hazard and must be cabled or removed as soon as possible. The owner would like approval to remove this Sugar Maple along with the other three trees in this application.

Colonial homes had dormers of various widths. A three-window dormer is not inappropriate to the style of this house and provides a better balance to the rear façade and mirrors the 2nd story window directly below. As the dormer is in the rear of the house, the alteration will not be visible from the public way.

3. *The general compatibility of exterior design, scale, proportion, arrangement, texture, and materials proposed to be used.*

The proposed lattice fence differs from the lattice fence that was approved by the HDC in 1994 in that the lower portion of the fence is solid tongue-and-groove wood as opposed to the open lattice from the previous application. The proposed lattice fence is 6'3-3/4" in height. A detail of the lattice fence is attached along with the drawing from the approved 1994 application. The fence is of wood, and it will be painted white with a gray top panel. The fence comes in sections, 8'6-11/32" in length and 6'3-3/4" in height, which the homeowners will install along the property.



Proposed Lattice Fence

Regarding the rear dormer, the homeowner has stated that he intends to replicate the existing windows with the same materials, style, and craftsmanship. The dormer windows, as proposed, will mirror the 2nd story windows in design, material and scale.



Existing Rear Central Dormer



Proposed Changes to Rear Central Dormer (PhotoShop Manipulation).

4. *To any other factors, including aesthetic factors, which the Commission deems to be pertinent.*

The proposed fence must meet all requirements of the City of Rockville Zoning Ordinance.

The applicants should provide samples of the proposed lattice fence.

The proposed alterations to the rear dormer are not visible from the public way.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS: Staff recommends approval for the installation of a 6'3-3/4" lattice fence along the rear yard and side yard boundaries of 311 W. Montgomery Avenue per the attached drawings and the following conditions:

1. Since the previous permit and HDC approval has lapsed, a new letter from the DPW is necessary to address the encroachment upon a publicly owned alley.
2. As the shed that was previously on the property line is now gone, the owner may opt to place the fence on the rear property line.
3. The proposed fence meet all requirements of the City of Rockville Zoning Ordinance; and

Staff recommends the approval of the proposed dormer widening as appropriate to the style of the house and compatible with the existing materials and design. Staff finds that it will have no adverse effect on the character of the house or of the streetscape.



Maple tree rear yard by driveway

Staff recommends approval of the removal of the three trees as stated in this application, as per the recommendation of the City Forester with the additional condition:

Removal of the Sugar Maple in the right rear yard, as per the determination by the City Forester that it is an immediate hazard.